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February 7, 2012

Obama's Failed Russia "Reset"

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Three years ago today, Vice President Biden [said](#) it was "time to press the reset button" in the U.S. relationship with Russia. Just last month Secretary of State Clinton [claimed](#) there is "a lot to show" in the Russia reset effort. The evidence demonstrates the "reset" to be wholly one-sided, as Russia continues to take numerous policy positions contrary to U.S. national security interests.

Protecting Syria at the United Nations

- On February 4, 2012, one day after Syrian forces [slaughtered](#) 250 of their own citizens, and on the same day they [murdered](#) 200 more, Russia chose to stand with Syria and against the United States. Russia vetoed a U.N. Security Council Resolution regarding the Syrian government's forcible repression of its citizens' universal freedoms.
- In August 2011, President Obama [called](#) on Syrian dictator Bashar Assad "to step aside," and said the U.S. was leading "an effort at the U.N. Security Council to condemn Syria's actions."
- Russia had already [vetoed](#) a resolution that would have "condemned" violence in Syria, even after it had weakened the resolution to where increased sanctions were not included.
- This was the second Security Council Resolution in four months Russia has vetoed pertaining to Syria that Russia had "[vastly watered-down](#)" the same way.

Protecting Iran's Illicit Nuclear Program

- Russia continues to serve as Iran's protector at the United Nations.
- Last year, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) released a [report](#) providing extensive analysis of the information giving rise to its "serious concerns" about Iran's nuclear program. The IAEA explained it is becoming "increasingly concerned" about the military nature of Iran's nuclear program.
- Russia has specifically [rejected](#) the idea of additional sanctions in the wake of this report.
- Russia continues to [deliver](#) nuclear fuel to Iran, and last year signed a protocol for continued cooperation with Iran at the nuclear reactor at Bushehr.

Protecting North Korea at the United Nations

- Russia voted against a U.N. General Assembly Resolution expressing tepid concern at “the persistence of continuing reports of systematic, widespread and grave violations of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.” It was [joined](#) in the vote by other human rights bad actors such as China, Cuba, Myanmar (Burma), Sudan, Syria, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe.

Unfair Elections

- Secretary of State Clinton [assessed](#) Russia’s 2011 parliamentary elections to be “neither free nor fair.”
- Most analysts do not expect much improvement in the March 4, 2012, Russian presidential election.

Russia’s deteriorating human rights record

- In his [speech](#) accepting the Nobel Peace Prize, President Obama said support for human rights was critical to peace and emphasized that America’s interests are not served “by the denial of human aspirations.”
- At the same time, the State Department has made the following [observations](#) about human rights in Russia:
 - “The restrictions on political competition and interference in local and regional elections in ways that restricted citizens’ right to change their government continued.”
 - “Arbitrary detention and politically motivated imprisonments were problems.”
 - “The government controlled many media outlets and infringed on freedoms of speech and expression, pressured major independent media outlets to abstain from critical coverage, and harassed and intimidated some journalists into practicing self-censorship.”
 - “The government limited freedom of assembly, and police at times used violence to prevent groups from engaging in peaceful protest.”
 - “Rule of law and due process violations remained a problem.”
 - “Corruption was widespread throughout the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, and officials often engaged in corrupt practices.”
 - “Corruption in law enforcement remained a serious problem.”
 - “Political and executive influence on the judicial system was observed in some high-profile cases.”

Stealing U.S. Intellectual Property

- Russia remains on the U.S. Trade Representative Priority [Watch List](#) due to “ongoing concerns, particularly with respect to piracy over the Internet and enforcement generally.”
- The most recent list expressed particular concern that “hard goods counterfeiting and piracy continue to be [widespread](#)” in Russia, “particularly for the motion picture, television and entertainment software industries.”

- It further took note of industry reports that “warehouses storing pirated CDs and DVDs remain on several government-controlled military-industrial sites.”

As the Obama Administration continues to move forward with arms control negotiations with Russia, these data points undermine past [assessments](#), such as by the Secretary of State, that arms control cooperation like “a ratified New START Treaty would also continue our progress toward broader U.S.-Russian cooperation.”

Three years on, Obama’s Russia “reset” policy has failed. Russia has continually taken positions contrary to U.S. interests. The Russia “reset” remains one-sided in which the United States makes all the concessions and Russia reaps all the reward.